

## NEEDS ASSESSMENT

- Needs Assessment is the process of determining what issues are important to customers and systems served by the Public Behavioral Health Systems.
- There are many methods of learning about needs, including use of existing data, conducting surveys, community forums or focus groups, and working with advisory committees or key informants.
- Needs Assessment is paired with Priority Setting, a process for determining which issues are most important, and Strategic Planning to map out how issues can best be addressed.

### **Priority Setting**

- While groups have many needs, resources are often quite limited. Priority Setting is the process of involving clients and stakeholders in determining which needs are most important.
- Documentation of Stakeholder-determined priorities is necessary to ensure that projects, funding and initiatives address important community needs.
- There are many processes, formal and informal, for documenting clientele / stakeholder priorities. Methods include surveys, group exercises, and focus groups

## **NEEDS ASSESSMENT: FINDING THE RIGHT JUNGLE A PARABLE**

A group of managers had set a goal to clear a dense jungle. They put focused all their efforts on doing this as efficiently and productively as possible. They hired workers, trained them on how to use machetes and other equipment, deployed them according to the most effective schedule, and supported their efforts. They were making great progress.

The organization's leader got involved. He climbed the highest hill in the jungle and surveyed the work and looked at the landscape beyond. Then he shouted out to the workers and managers below, "Wrong Jungle!"

This story is from Steven Covey, "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People." It is related to the second habit, "**BEGIN WITH THE END IN MIND.**" This is a story that highlights the difference between management and leadership. It highlights the difference between the bottom-line focus: How can I best accomplish certain things? and a Leadership top-line focus: What are the things I want to accomplish?

**NEEDS ASSESSMENT** might be defined as determining how to apply your expertise, knowledge and skills to best serve the needs of your clientele. To determine this, information is needed. Information from clientele groups and other stakeholders about what is important to them. What are the most important problems they need to solve?

### **Focus Our Efforts**

We all have fewer and fewer resources to work with, and the needs we have to address seem only to increase. **How can we be successful?**

- (1) We need to be successful in obtaining external resources to address the issues; wherever possible, we need to leverage university, state and Federal agency and local partner resources.
- (2) Because resources will always be limited, we need to prioritize all the needs and make strategic choices about the allocation of resources.

Identification of needs and priorities should be the foundation of our system, and since needs continually "change with the times," it is an ongoing process.

**START WITH THE END IN MIND. WHAT DOES THAT END LOOK LIKE?  
ASK!**

## Q & A

**Q. *We already know what the needs of our state are. Why do more assessment and more planning?***

**A.** Maybe you do. Maybe everyone knows what the needs are, and there's no doubt about it. In other words, if the building is burning, put out the fire. You don't need a needs assessment to tell you that.

But a lot of the time, the needs are not quite so clear. You (and everyone else) have opinions and biases, but does everyone feel the same way? Wouldn't it be worth checking what other people think, just to clarify whether others share your point of view? You might or might not revise your opinions a little, but it's worth it to find out.

**Q. *We're busy people. We want to get going.***

**A.** Fine...but you wouldn't usually want to get involved in something that most of the community or the state doesn't really care about. If you do a needs assessment, you will feel more assured knowing that what you want to do meets a real community need. Otherwise, you might be wasting your time.

**Q. *We don't have enough time to do a good survey.***

**A.** The actual amount of time you need can vary a great deal. If you really want to do a full-scale scientific survey, you could spend a year or more collecting, tabulating, and writing up the data. But we're not normally talking about that kind of time investment. You can collect useful data in much less time. You can go to meetings where your key audience is, and ask them a few questions, either verbally or with a printed questionnaire and get results back relatively quickly. If you have a choice, you may want to survey more people, with different questions, in different ways. There are many different degrees of comprehensiveness. But any surveying is always better than no surveying at all. It's likely that whatever time you can afford will be worth it.

**Look at it this way: If you care about effective action, do you have the time not to find out about community needs?**

**Q. *People are already surveyed to death. They'll resent you for asking them yet again.***

**A.** Generally, the opposite is true. In fact, most people are rarely asked about what they think about state or community needs. Usually, projects seem to get going, or not get going, independent of collective opinion in the state or community.

When was the last time a group asked your opinion about state or community needs, as part of a formal survey? And if they did ask, did you resent them for it?

**THE REAL PROBLEM MAY BE THAT WE ARE NOT ASSESSING ENOUGH AND NOT ACTING ON THE BASIS OF ASSESSMENT RESULTS.**

# **DRAFT PROPOSAL FOR NEBRASKA**

## **SCOPE**

- Lifespan (include children/adolescents - adults - older adults (geriatric))
- **Public health- or population-based approach** to include prevention aspect where possible (i.e., in addition to the individuals who are already receiving care, we will try to address issues of prevention and early detection of behavioral disorders and substance abuse in the general population; this may also touch upon suicide prevention in the general population especially for adolescents)
- We will use California report as a template/example. In addition, we will include chapters on primary care-behavioral health integration and other topics that are urgent and important for Nebraska (To be determined in next 2 weeks)

## **TARGET AUDIENCE (WHO WILL READ /USE THE NEEDS ASSESSMENT REPORT?)**

- Policy makers
- Behavioral health regional administrators
- Consumer advocate groups
- County/regional public health departments
- DHHS (Specific units/programs include but not limited to: Behavioral health, Medicaid, Children & Family Services, Public Health, Developmental Disabilities)
- Criminal justice
- Veterans'

In addition to the above, we may expect the following groups to read/use the report:

- Health care systems
- Insurance companies

## **TYPES OF DATA**

- See attached draft - UNMC identified potential data sources we can use for NE report. California report data sources are expected to exist for most of Nebraska as well. These include administrative/claims data from BH division, Medicaid, national survey / statistical reports, Census, BRFSS data, consumer survey, etc.
- UNMC will also collect data by conducting focus groups and surveys - this will focus on consumer and family input but other stakeholders will be also included.

## **ENGAGEMENT OF CONSUMERS**

- "Mobilizing for Action Through Planning & Partnership (MAPP) is a community-driven strategic planning process for improving community health"
- We will adapt MAPP model to engage consumers and other stakeholders for the needs assessment.
- See the Power Point slides (attached) for more information about MAPP
- More discussion needed to how we use the MAPP for the Nebraska BH assessment